



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 December 2022

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to
the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Women in Europe for a Common Future, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Women in Europe for a Common Future wants to highlight a few aspects regarding the 67th Commission on the Status of Women's priority theme:

Innovation and Technology Should Be Used for a Gender-just Green Transition

There is a connection between this year's and last year's Commission on the Status of Women's priority themes and Women in Europe for a Common Future wants to point out important synergies and opportunities. When it comes to achieving gender equality for climate, environment and disaster-risk reduction, currently a lot of ambition depend on our continuous innovation and technology.

We call for ensuring that the digital and green transitions strengthen each other instead of undermining each other. At the same time the transitions should contribute to more equality.

The focus should be on solutions that are working, for example women's initiatives combining ancestral and locally rooted knowledge with innovation. One example is the work of the Women in Europe for a Common Future partners in Guinea-Bissau: They use innovative solar salt drying techniques which reduce emissions and transform working conditions. In the rice fields, water pipes and strengthened dikes provide protection from excessive sea water rise and stabilize harvests. This leads to the reduction of firewood consumption from the mangroves (traditionally used for drying salt) by 3 tons for each ton of salt produced. Women in Europe for a Common Future calls for more support for upscaling those innovative climate and environmental solutions that are locally rooted and gender-just.

Currently there is a risk in focusing on technological fixes that do not contribute to what should be our main goal, the system change. Corporations are continuing their pollution and emissions massively. To offset them, large investments are made in solutions that have not been proven yet (like carbon storage), or that are currently dangerous and too long-term, like seeing nuclear energy as a green energy source. Another risk is that these "technofixes" for a green transition do not benefit everyone equally, therefore we strongly call for intersectional gender analysis before introducing a new technology.

Awareness of Gender Digital Divide

The existence of the digital gender gap cannot be ignored and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gender inequality due to the pre-existing digital divide. The digital gender gap is about access to technology/access to internet and at the same time about the ability to use the technology, thus online skills.

It is about access which is related to the inability to afford such technology (due to the gendered income gap and the care burden) and it is also about technology skills. The "stereotype of technology being masculine" is still alive which leads to barriers for women and girls to learn about and to use the technology.

Women in Europe for a Common Future calls for dismantling the gender pay and care gap providing women and girls in all their diversity with the necessary resources to invest in technologies and access to internet. We also call for overcoming gender stereotypes and bringing more girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and taking a lead in computer and online skill and knowledge building.

The Challenge of Online Safety

Women and girls are much less likely to be safe online, as online gendered violence is prevalent. 52 per cent of young women globally have experienced some form of digital harm, and 87 per cent believe this problem is getting worse. This is even increasing for women of colour and is more prevalent when expressing opinions on political topics.

Furthermore, there are risks with a lack of data protection, which specifically affects women human rights defenders and environmental human rights defenders working in the context of severely limited civic space. They can be tracked in their activities and risk their lives if there are no safe spaces.

Innovation and digitalization also present us with opportunities here. There is a good practice example of one of Women in Europe for a Common Future's partners in Latin-America. Fundacion Plurales strengthened women environmental rights defenders from indigenous peoples and local groups in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. A network of over 1,200 women has been built, and an innovative mobile phone application was launched to inform, connect, protect and communicate efficiently. This supports the protection of territories deteriorated by extractivism, agrochemical contamination and the restriction of local actors' civic space. A feminist school was established in 2021 to strengthen local knowledge, technical and advocacy skills for climate adaptation and mitigation, with the aim to improve the groups' resilience and amplify their demands.

Women in Europe for a Common Future calls for more safety online for women and girls in all their diversity and gender responsive data protection legislation and its proper implementation.
